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Testimony

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Hon. James V. Hanson, Chairman

Regarding

S. 548

"To Establish the Fallen Timbers Battlefield and Fort Miamis National Historic Site in the State of Ohio."

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Good morning, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of S. 548, a bill to establish the Fallen Timbers Battlefield and Fort Miamis as a National Historic Site.

INTRODUCTION:

Although the Yorktown campaign is seen as the final act of the American Revolution, the war in the West continued for more than a decade. North of the Ohio River, the vast territory ceded to the United States by the Treaty of Paris in 1783 was a prize that remained in the eyes of all parties to this western war. The United States saw the Northwest Territory as a source of revenue for war debts and a reservoir of private property that would protect the citizens of this new experiment in democracy from undue government influence. Great Britain saw the same area as a great reservoir of furs and other resources that would support her empire, and was uncomfortable over the loss of the territory to her former colony. For the Native Americans the issue was fundamental. They faced the loss of their homelands forever to an invasion of frontiersmen and settlers totally unlike themselves. For ten years these three interest groups struggled for control and, by 1794, the storm front lay at the lower rapids of the Maumee River in present Northwest Ohio (Pratt 1995).

The "Foot of the Rapids" of the Maumee River formed the demarcation line between the naval power of Great Britain's lake fleet and the great human resources of the United States. The "Legion of the United States," a well equipped and well-disciplined force of some 2000 regular troops and 1500 Kentucky militia all commanded by General Anthony Wayne, had demonstrated its ability to move uncontested through the Ohio country. Britain's naval power protected its Indian allies, supplied the Indian Department Post and supported the construction of a new military post, Fort Miamis; all with a relatively small military commitment. Thus, each nation could operate with little threat on its own side of the Maumee Rapids, but feared confronting the other on its own home ground.

The Fallen Timbers campaign resulted in a clear victory for the United States, was a policy failure for Britain, and was a disaster for the Native Tribes. Through the Treaty of Greenville, the U.S. gained possession of Detroit, the largest city in the Great Lakes, and gained control of most of the strategic river crossings in the Northwest Territory - an area that became five of the United States. Britain suffered a loss of face before the Americans and, more importantly, in the eyes of the Indian warriors they had exploited as a source of military support for their own goals. Without the support of these tribes, Britain was unwilling and unable to keep its hold on the Northwest Territory. The Battle of Fallen Timbers destroyed the strong military alliance that had developed among the tribes of the Old Northwest. This confederacy, perhaps the most successful in the history of Native resistance to American expansion, collapsed on the battlefield, leaving the tribes to negotiate from a position of weakness. As a result, the tribes gave up most of the present state of Ohio and were brought under the military control of the United States. Never again would these tribes form a serious threat to US expansion. Within fifty years virtually all their claims to the land were extinguished.

The Battle of Fallen Timbers and Fort Miamis are widely recognized as significant to the formation of our country. The National Register of Historic Places already lists Fort Miamis. In 1959, the Battle of Fallen Timbers was included in the National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings and in 1960 it was designated as a National Historic Landmark. From 1981-1984 I conducted archaeological research at Fort Miamis [Exhibit # 1.] and in 1995 I carried out an archaeological assessment of the Fallen Timbers Battlefield

[Exhibit # 2.] (Pratt 1983,1984, 1995, 1995a). The archaeological research uncovered new information on the location and structure of both sites and renewed academic and public interest in the sites and the events of 1794. In 1998, the National Park Service completed a Special Resource Study examining the proposed designation and suitability of the site and determined that the Battle of Fallen Timbers Battlefield site meets the criteria for affiliated unit status. Today, it remains only for Congress to officially recognize the national significance of these sites. I am here as a professional and as a citizen to testify to the significance of the Fallen Timbers Battlefield and Fort Miamis.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE.

Fort Miamis was the last British colonial post built in the Northwest Territory. Constructed during the spring and summer of 1794, the fort occupied the north bank of the Maumee River at the point of divergence of the land and water routes to Detroit, Britain's stronghold in the Great Lakes. Occupied by two companies of the British 24th Regiment and armed with thirteen pieces of artillery, Fort Miamis was designed to prevent a US attack on Detroit and protect the nearby Department of Indian Affairs storehouses and other British interests in the area. Fort Miamis became a rallying point for Native American forces retreating in the face of the US advance under Maj. General Anthony Wayne in the summer of 1794.

On the morning of August 20, 1794, the Legion of the United States commanded by Major General Anthony Wayne and two brigades of Kentucky Militia struck an ambush line of 900 to 1100 Indian warriors. The point guard of 150 mounted militia struck the center of the ambush line, were overwhelmed, and rapidly retreated with several hundred warriors in pursuit. A front guard of about eighty Federal infantrymen slowed the momentum of the attack with three volleys of musket fire, but was also routed. Several hundred yards behind this action, the Legion, marching in three parallel columns, reacted quickly to the sounds of gunfire. Light Infantry and Rifle companies were deployed as skirmishers about 160 yards in advance of the main infantry columns, each of which began to display into a line of battle. General James Wilkinson's right column, consisting of the First and Third Sub-Legions, formed a battle line some 800 yards wide. On the left, Col. John Hamtramck's column formed two lines, with the Fourth Sub-Legion in front and the Second Sub-Legion in reserve. Between the infantry wings, General Wayne's center column deployed parts of four artillery companies supported by Light Infantry, Riflemen and Dragoons. During the 20 to 40 minutes required to form the U.S. battle line, a firefight developed between the attacking warriors and the U.S. skirmish line. Using an area of fallen timbers for cover, an increasing number of warriors pressured the front and flanks of the skirmish line, forcing it to withdraw at least 80 yards. At this point, the Legion's battle line came under fire from the advancing Indian forces. To counter the Indian flanking movement the 4th Sub Legion was ordered forward onto the U.S. left flank, but the entire army charged the Indian positions before this move was completed. As over 1000 Legionnaires surged forward, more than 800 mounted Kentucky Militia were ordered forward onto the left flank, widening the battlefield to about a mile. Native resistance collapsed in the face of this tide of bayonets and the warriors fled from the battlefield.

At Fort Miamis a few miles downstream, the British were able to hear the battle. They sent no troops in support of their Native American allies. In the aftermath of the battle, the garrison observed Indian warriors in retreat and later were approached and threatened by Wayne and his troops. Although no shots were fired in this event, the first direct confrontation between the new United States and its former colonial master, it demonstrated to the Native tribes that they were now without allies in their fight with the United States. Disheartened, the confederacy of the tribes broke down and they began to sue for peace on an individual basis. It was the beginning of the end of both British and Native American control of the Old Northwest [Exhibit # 3.](Pratt 1983, 1995).

SIGNIFICANCE

General Dave Palmer (US Army, ret.), author of *1794: America, Its Army and the Birth of the Nation*, called the Battle of Fallen Timbers one of three definitive battles in American History (Palmer 1994). Like the Battle of Yorktown which opened the way for America to break free from colonial control and establish itself as an independent country, and like the Battle of Gettysburg, the pivotal event of the Civil War; Fallen Timbers marked a turning point in US history. In my brief statement in support of S. 548, I will outline four areas in which the United States of America was turned onto a new course as a result of the events that occurred at Fallen Timbers and Fort Miamis. The four areas are presented in increasing order of significance.

The battle of Fallen Timbers was significant to the fledgling US Army. American regulars and militia had been severely beaten in two previous campaigns against the combined Native Tribes of the Northwest Territory. After these defeats President Washington and Congress authorized the reorganization of the Army into the "Legion of the United States" and appointed Major General Anthony Wayne to lead it in a third and final attempt to secure the Northwest Territory. A failure of this expedition would have resulted in abandoning US territory to its Native inhabitants and their British allies. Wayne organized, recruited and trained a disciplined fighting force and led it to victory at Fallen Timbers. The reputation of the US army was restored by the defeat of the twice-victorious Indian confederacy and by its successful confrontation with the British at Fort Miamis. These events were crucial to the development of the US military as an institution (Jacobs 1947, P. Nelson 1985, Palmer 1994, Sword 1985).

For the Native Americans, the Battle of Fallen Timbers destroyed their here-to-for successful defense of the Old Northwest and resulted in restrictions, reservations and eventually removal from their homeland. After nearly 50 years of armed resistance and the defeat of the two previous US expeditions, Fallen Timbers was a shocking setback to Little Turtle, Blue Jacket, Tarhe, and the other leaders of the Indian confederacy. The death of many leading warriors and the failure of the British at Fort Miamis to engage in the battle instantly disheartened the tribes (Nelson 1999). The Battle of Fallen Timbers was the pivot on which the Native American tribes swung from a policy of armed resistance, towards that of negotiated settlement. Within a year of the Battle, in the 1795 Treaty of Greenville, the Indian leadership gave up their rights to much of Ohio and granted concessions in key areas throughout the Northwest Territory. Never again would Indian resistance seriously impede US efforts at expansion. Little Turtle of the Miami, Tarhe of the Wyandot, and Blackhoof of the Shawnee spent the rest of their lives leading their peoples along a path of peace and cooperation with their American conquerors. In spite of restrictions and eventual removal, their identity and cultural ways have survived and today their descendants constitute recognized and intact Native American tribes. Conversely, Tecumseh chose the path of war and renewed the alliance with the British. During the War of 1812 Tecumseh and his followers were again disappointed by their allies, defeated and destroyed. Clearly, the Battle of Fallen Timbers was significant in the course of the history of Native Americans.

The victory at Fallen Timbers reinvigorated US efforts to expand beyond the old colonial boundaries. Through the Ordinance of 1787, the US began the process of creating new states out of the newly conquered Northwest Territory. Within nine years of the battle, parts of the frontier became the State of Ohio. Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin were also formed from the territory secured by the Battle of Fallen Timbers. The natural and human resources from these five states provided the industrial, agricultural, and population base that fueled the development of the United States throughout its first century of existence. The Great Lakes port cities of Chicago, Detroit, Cleveland, Buffalo, Toledo and Green Bay developed in the territory secured by the Battle of Fallen Timbers. Ten US Presidents have been elected from the Northwest Territory States and the area is still sometimes termed the "heartland" of America. Without this victory all

of this might be Canadian history.

Finally, The Battle of Fallen Timbers represents a turning point in the leadership of the America. The organization and leadership of the Fallen Timbers Campaign was the responsibility of the Founding Fathers and in many ways this campaign marks the end of their revolutionary experience. By 1794 America had achieved independence, confederated thirteen independent states and then united them under the Constitution, but the focus was now shifting to the western frontier. President Washington had seen the Ohio Valley as a young man; but Jefferson, Knox, Hamilton and most of Congress knew of the west only by second-hand accounts. Fallen Timbers marks the rise of a new generation of leadership, forged by the hardships of a wilderness campaign, impressed by the potential of the west, and anxious to build on the example of the founding fathers. These "founding sons" include: William Henry Harrison, later Governor of Indiana, Hero of the war of 1812, member of this House of Representatives, Senator, and finally 9th President of the United States. Four other Representatives (Ferdinand Claiborne, Howell Cobb, Leonard Covington, and Solomon Van Rennselaer), Governors of Kentucky and Missouri, and the US Consul at Tunis during the Barbary Pirates affair were all veterans of the Battle of Fallen Timbers. Explorers Lewis and Clark and Zebulon Pike, who opened the "next" US frontier, were all veterans of the Legion, though only Clark fought at Fallen Timbers. Seven of the battle's veterans became generals and many chose the military as their career. Like Tecumseh and Harrison, several of these veterans returned to the battlefield area in 1813 to lead men over the same ground where they had fought 18 years earlier. Fort Miamis, once again in the hands of an invading British force, played a key role in the events of 1813. In 1813 General William Henry Harrison used the Battle of Fallen Timbers as an inspiration for his troops. Standing in sight of the Fallen Timbers Battlefield, Harrison proclaimed its significance and pointed out the relationship between his own generation and the founding fathers:

"...Can the breast of an American Soldier when he casts his eyes to the opposite shore, the scene of his country's triumph over the same foes be influenced by any other feeling than the hopes of victory and glory, is not this army composed of the same materials which fought and conquered under the immortal Wayne? Yes fellow soldiers, your general sees your countenances beam with the same fire that he witnessed upon that glorious occasion. And although it would be the height of presumption to compare himself to a Hero, he boasts of being that Hero's pupil. To your posts then, fellow soldiers, and remember that the eyes of your country are upon you" (L. Nelson 1985)

Two hundred five years later, the eyes of the country are now upon us. Today, I ask you to reflect on the judgement of the participants, many of whom wrote about the event [Exhibit # 4.]; I ask you to reflect on the judgement of President Harrison, a participant and a member of this House of Representatives- one of your own. I ask you to reflect on the judgement of Senator DeWine and Congresswoman Kaptur who support this bill and on the National Park Service Special Resource Study. I urge you to pass S. 548 and designate the Fallen Timbers Battlefield and Fort Miamis as a national historic site. This is the site of actions significant to the early history of the Nation, of several Native American tribes, and is associated with the first two generations of the founders of our nation.

Mister Chairman, Thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony.

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Exhibit List: Testimony of G. Michael Pratt relating to S. 548

Exhibit # 1.

The Rise and Fall of Fort Miamis: The Best Laid Plans" *Proceedings of the Symposium on Ohio Valley Urban and Historic Archaeology* 3: 122-127, Archaeological Survey, Louisville, KY. 1983

This article presents information on the construction of Fort Miamis in the spring of 1794 as well as information derived through archaeological investigations of the site.

Exhibit # 2.

"The Archaeology of the Fallen Timbers Battlefield: A Report of the 1995 Field Survey." Prepared for The Maumee Valley Heritage Corridor, Inc. <http://www.heidelberg.edu/FallenTimbers/FTFinal01.html>

This document reports on the results of the archeological survey that determined the actual site of the Fallen Timbers Battlefield. The methodology used in the survey, a list of artifacts recovered by the survey, and a list of volunteers who participated in the project is included in this report.

Exhibit # 3.

The Battle of Fallen Timbers: An Eyewitness Perspective. *Northwest Ohio Quarterly*. 67(1): 4-34. 1995

This article presents an interpretation of the events at the Battle of Fallen Timbers and Fort Miamis in the days surrounding August 20, 1794. The information is drawn primarily from accounts of participants. This article predicted the location of the Fallen Timbers Battlefield and precipitated the archaeological survey that located the Fallen Timbers Battlefield in the area now proposed as the National Historic Site.

Exhibit # 4.

Eyewitness Accounts of the events of the Battle of Fallen Timbers and Fort Miamis, August 20, 1794.

A list of published and unpublished accounts relating to the significance and events surrounding the Fallen Timbers and Fort Miamis sites.

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